in the Embassy, refusing to leave the premises. This is after repeated assurances giving by the officers of the Ministry of Social Affairs & Labour, including Minister of Social Affairs and Labour that it would be ensured that they will not be subjected to any harassment or persecution if they go back to work. However, they are adamant that they would return to work only after a salary of KD 85 is agreed to by the company.

Nurses are exempted from the requirement of Emigration Clearance under present rules. Only in the case of semi-skilled and unskilled workers, emigration clearance is required. In case of any breach of contract, there are adequate mechanisms for redressal in the countries of employment. Therefore, no change in existing regulatory mechanism is envisaged.

[Translation]

Illegal Indian Labourers

*9. SHRI JAGAT VIR SINGH DRONA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether several illegal Indian labourers were expelled from United Arab Emirates during the last year;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the number of labourers so expelled;

(c) whether the Government propose to assist them in getting back their employment; and

(d) if so, the details of the steps taken/proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTRENAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMALA SINHA): (a) to (d) It is estimated that in 1996, about 60,000 Indians returned to India availing of the amnesty scheme declared by the Government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for illegal aliens. The Amnesty scheme, which was originally effective from July 1, 1996 to September 30, 1996 was later extended upto October 31, 1996.

Special counters were set up by the Government of India in select Passport Offices to enable expeditious issue of travel documents to all those who had returned on emergency certificates. The Indian Missions in the UAE kept in close touch with the local authorities to ensure that the returnees did not have any restrictions placed on their return to UAE.

The Government of India estimates that upto May 31, 1997, at least 45,000 Indians had got emigration clearance to take up jobs in the UAE. This number would include a large number of those who had earlier returned from the UAE. To facilitate clearance, Government of India had even suspended the requirement for employment contracts to be pre-screened by Indian Missions in the UAE, so that there was single window clearance of fresh recruitment.

[English]

Development in Afghanistan

*10. SHRI RAGHUNANDAN LAL BHATIA:

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) how Government of India views the development in Afghanistan;

(b) whether the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan has a direct bearing on the policies of South Asia; and

(c) the steps the Government of India has taken to see that the situation becomes normal in Afghanistan?

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): (a) to (c) India and Afghanistan share historical linkages, civilizational and cultural affinities and warm ties of friendship and cooperation dating back to the remote past. The continuing instability and turmoil and the resultant tragedy and suffering is, therefore, a cause for continuing concern.

These development in Afghanistan, which are closely monitored by Government, have a bearing on India's security and affect the peace and stability of the region.

Government have also been diplomatically active on Afghanistan. There is recognition that India has vital interests in Afghanistan. Government were invited and participated in the Regional Conference on Afghanistan hosted by Iran on 29-30 October, 1996 in Tehran. The UN convened meetings in November 1996 and April 1997 of countries with knowledge, interest and influence regarding Afghanistan to which India was invited. Government's participation was positive and constructive. India also took part in the UN sponsored International Forum for Assistance to Afghanistan held in Ashgabat in January, 1997. India has also been in close touch with countries who take an interest in Afghan affairs.

Our programme of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan in the form of medicines, foodstuff and clothing and supply and fitting of artificial limbs has continued. In addition, India has also pledged to provide humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan through the UN mechanism.

Misuse of Central Fund by States

*11. SHRI G.A. CHARAN REDDY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Planning Commission has warned Chief Ministers that their annual allocations will be drastically cut if they are found misusing funds given for completing Centrally funded projects in the States;

(b) if so, whether the Planning Commission noticed in the past that many State Governments had diverted their funds from Centrally funded projects to other projects; and

(c) if so, names of the States held responsible in